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1026 17th STREET, N. W., WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

The High Cost of Campaigning: What To Do About It?

HOW much does it cost to elect a President of the United States? To elect a Member of Congress? Who puts up the money? How is it spent?

The general public has a big stake in the answers to these questions. There is an unexplained gap of many millions between the amounts officially reported as contributed and spent, and the unofficial but probably more realistic estimates made by students of practical politics.

Mounting costs of campaigning have been caused by the use of television and radio for communication, airplanes for travel, and the fact that the dollar today doesn't buy as much of anything as it used to.

There is wide agreement that elections cost too much; that they are financed by a comparatively few large contributors whose influence might carry undue weight with elected officials because of their important financial support; that the public should have more information about campaign financing.

Congress Takes a Look

Spurred on by public opinion, Congress is now taking a new look at the laws regulating election spending and before it adjourns may bring them more into line with the financial facts of life in 1956.

Congress began to enact laws to prevent election frauds as long ago as 1870. The Corrupt Practices Act of 1925, the Act to Prevent Pernicious Political Activities (passed in 1939 and known as the Hatch Act), and provisions in the Taft-Hartley law are the chief sources of the ground rules on which elections operate now. Admittedly the spending ceilings and the reporting procedures they set are outdated and unrealistic.

The present law permits individu-

als to contribute not more than \$5,000 to any one candidate or political committee. Committees have multiplied under this provision.

The two major bills now before the Senate impose an over-all maximum of \$10,000 on contributions from an individual in any one campaign for influencing the outcome of an election. The bills also define "political committees," place more liberal ceilings on expenditures and contributions to such committees, require a more complete system of reporting, and provide for far more supervision.

Ceilings on Spending?

The problem of controlling campaign spending is approached in much the same way by both bills. S.636, introduced by Senator Hennings (D., Mo.) and others last year, applies to primary as well as general elections. S.3308, introduced February 28, 1956, by Senators Johnson (D., Tex.), Knowland (R., Calif.) and 85 co-sponsors, excludes primaries, as does the present Corrupt Practices Act.

Both bills attempt to define political committees so as to reflect contributions and expenditures on the basis of interstate and intrastate activities. They require every contribution of \$100 or more to be reported to the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate, and to the U. S. Court of the District in which the candidate lives or the committee operates. Appropriate committees of House and Senate would be given the responsibility of supervising the administration of the Act.

No national political committee could receive contributions or make expenditures in amounts greater than the total vote cast for President in any one of the last three elections,

multiplied by 20 cents. This amount would total about \$12.3 million. The present ceiling is \$3 million.

Spending limits, subject to state laws, would be established for House and Senate elections.

S.3308 would require national broadcasting systems to supply equal time to all political parties receiving four per cent of the vote in the last election, with a formula for permitting new or growing parties to obtain the same treatment on the air.

State Election Laws

Some states have overhauled their election laws in the last few years and some of their regulations may serve as guides to better federal procedures. For instance, Minnesota now allows an income tax deduction for campaign contributions up to \$100. A provision for federal tax deduction of like amount has been introduced in the House by Representative Mills (D., Ark.). The intent of this proposal is to attract more small contributions, to spread the base of support for political activities.

Much discussion has been going on outside Congress about the necessity for greater citizen interest and participation in elections. Suggestions include: campaigns for many small contributions to the political parties; a national foundation to handle all contributions; financing of campaigns by the federal government. This last plan is that followed by Great Britain, where election costs are kept at a minimum.

Many informed students of practical politics believe that ceilings on contributions and spending are useless, because ways to circumvent the rules will always be found. They believe that an informed public is the only safeguard to honest elections.

DISARMAMENT DILEMMA

THE Disarmament Conference which began in London March 19, 1956, is the latest of several attempts since 1946 to get a real weapons control and arms reduction program started. Current discussions are being held at a meeting of the five-nations (United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France, Canada) U. N. Subcommittee on Disarmament.

Control and reduction of armaments proposals have been submitted at this meeting by both the United States and Russia. The proposals combine piecemeal suggestions made earlier and point up the difference in approach advocated by the West and the Soviet Union.

The President analyzed this difference at his news conference early in April. He is quoted as saying:

The Russians apparently continue to put down as the most important thing that there be an agreement of some kind before there is any system of determining whether either of us is living up to that agreement.

We insist that we devise the means for determining the degree to which we are carrying out agreements before the agreements themselves take effect. Now . . . you can put in all (the) details but that is the essential difference. . . .

The issues involved in disarmament negotiations are complex and delicate. Nations cannot reveal the status of their own defense programs, lest today's "friend" become tomorrow's enemy. No country wants to show its hand in such circumstances.

In 1946, when the United States was the only nation which had developed the atomic bomb, a Commission for Control of Atomic Weapons was established in the United Nations at the suggestion of the United States. The next year a U. N. Commission on Conventional Armaments was created. Members of these two

Commissions discussed what could be done, but in 1949, when it became apparent that we were in the midst of a cold war, all negotiations were broken off.

In 1952 the two Commissions were joined in the U. N. Disarmament Commission, with a membership of all nations represented in the Security Council, plus Canada. The present Subcommittee was created in 1954 because it was believed a smaller group could negotiate more successfully. The present meeting of the Subcommittee is its fifth.

The U. S. representative on the Commission is Harold E. Stassen, who was appointed by the President in March 1955 to develop broad studies, investigations and conclusions which, when concurred in by the National Security Council and approved by the President, will be basic policy toward disarmament.

At the meeting of heads of state in Geneva last July, the President made his proposal for inspection from the air to guard against surprise attacks. The reason for the proposal was a sound one: once nuclear weapons have been manufactured, there is no way to detect their existence. But if a nation is preparing to use them, preparations would be difficult to conceal from the air.

The "open sky" inspection proposal, and suggestions of the other participating countries, are the basis for current negotiations. Up until the time the President made this proposal the U. S. position on disarmament had been based on the 1946 Baruch plan for ground inspection, associated with plans for the limitation of conventional armaments and armed forces advanced by France, the United Kingdom and Canada. This included control of nuclear pro-

duction and inspection supervised by a control body.

After the Summit meeting the United States placed a reservation on all disarmament proposals made since 1946.

While the executive branch explores the possibilities of disarmament, the Senate, which will be called on to ratify any treaties on which the major powers might agree, has created a bipartisan Disarmament Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee.

Under the chairmanship of Senator Humphrey (D., Minn.), this 12-member group is studying disarmament proposals and their implications. It has held public hearings at which the problems involved have been discussed with various government officials. Hearings are also being held in cities outside Washington, for the Subcommittee to hear the views of interested citizens and expert witnesses.

The big question, still unresolved, is: Does Russia really want disarmament? The test of whether the Soviet Union is serious about arms reduction is whether they will agree to an open inspection system.

Discussion of related problems going on outside the United Nations as well as within that organization, revolves around these points: Can any type of disarmament be achieved without the settlement of other key political issues, such as those presented by the existence of two Germanys and two Chinas? Should disarmament be undertaken a step at a time, or should agreement be reached first on an over-all plan? Which countries should be included in the agreement? Should the maintenance of armaments at the present level be considered a symptom of a world disease, rather than the disease itself? How much sovereignty are other nations and the United States prepared to surrender to an inspection body strong enough to make enforcement of a disarmament program effective?

In Search of the Answers

FOR a good many years the large, nonprofessional organizations in the United States have been asking themselves the same questions over and over again: What are the reasons for membership turnover? What are the best methods for recruiting and training leadership? What are the best ways to increase responsible member participation? What is the impact on the community of the organization's work and how can it be improved? Questions like these and many others have been bothering our great national organizations. The University of Michigan is proposing to help find some of the answers.

A generous grant has been made by the Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation to the University of Michigan to enable its Institute for Social Research to undertake a study of voluntary associations designed primarily to promote citizenship. The League of Women Voters has been chosen as the group most essential to the study. It is expected that the plans will be ready to go into operation next fall.

It is anticipated that this undertaking will not be burdensome to local and state Leagues, and that the findings will be of great value to the League as a whole.

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1026 17th Street, N. W.
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MRS. JOHN G. LEE, President
DOROTHY FELKER GIRTON, Editor

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